

Southeast Fisheries Science Center  
Miami Laboratory  
75 Virginia Beach Drive  
Miami, FL 33149

October 19, 2005

TO: Sheryan Epperly,  
Protected Resources Branch

FROM: Dennis Lee,  
SEFSC Observer Coordinator

SUBJECT: Longline gear Incidental Take summary for quarter 3, 2005.

The Miami Laboratory Pelagic Observer Program (POP) is providing you with a summary report of the incidental take of marine mammals, turtles, and birds that have been recorded by observers aboard longline vessels for July 1 to September 30, 2005. The POP was involved in the regular coverage (8% target) of the fleet, in addition to providing observers for a Cooperative Research Program (CRP) for bycatch reduction project. Combining effort in sets from both observer events, the POP attained a coverage rate of 9.1%.

**Regular (8% target) Coverage Summary:**

The POP completed during quarter 3 a coverage rate of 4.5% during the regular selection (8%) of the pelagic longline fleet for the quarter (Table 1). Observers recorded seven (7) sea turtles (3 leatherback-alive; 4 loggerhead-alive), in addition to twelve (12) marine mammals (11-Pilot whale-alive; 1-mammal (sp.)-alive) and no (0) sea birds.

**CRP coverage summary:**

During quarter 3, the POP was also responsible for providing observers for a special Cooperative Research Program (CRP) on bycatch reduction research involving six (6) U.S. pelagic longline vessels participating in an experimental designed project. In general, these six vessels were utilizing their regular gear and following their typical fishing operations within their geographical fishing areas. The experimental design was comparing different hook baiting techniques (bait threaded vs. single hooked) in an alternating pattern and crews were also attaching scientific equipment (time-depth recorders and hook timers) on the gear. During this quarter, six (6) vessels participated in the CRP experimental design project, which required 100% observer coverage. Observer recorded incidental takes of protected species (Table 1) of eighteen (18) sea turtles (10-leatherback-alive; 8-loggerhead-alive), in addition to no (0) marine mammals and two (2) sea birds (1-Greater shearwater-alive; 1-Greater shearwater-dead).

Enclosed you will find the original Sea Turtle Life History (STLH) forms submitted by observers during the regular longline coverage as well as the CRP project. These data forms reviewed by the Miami PR division. Also enclosed are the accompanying photographs of sea turtles. After review of the original STLH forms, please return the originals to the POP office files.

In addition to the POP reporting of Protected Resource (PR) species recorded during observed

longline fishing, observers have been requested to inspect the turtle handling and dehooking gear available aboard the vessels as a requirement of the 2004 Biological Opinion (BO). As a requirement of the BO tasking for the Miami Laboratory, I am providing you with copies of the Miami PR Turtle Gear check list form either filled out by the observer or by POP staff during debriefing from quarter 3. A PDF file will be created and will be posted on the SEFSC-POP secured website.. Although it is not clear how this information will be processed, the originals will remain on file in the observer office, room 314. Finally, neither the Turtle Take Estimates (TTE) nor the Net Mortality Ratio (NMR) mentioned in the 2004 BO are provided as our program staffing does not have the expertise to conduct these analyses.

#### Attachments

Table of the Incidental Take summary for third quarter of 2005 by geographical area and sets observed; copies of STLF forms and associated turtle photographs for regular longline coverage; and copies of the Turtle Gear check list forms.

cc: Observer program files; Gerry Scott, Jim Bohnsack .

Table 1: Percent coverage (by sets),the incidental take of Protected Resource species (turtles, mammals, seabirds), and hook effort summarized by geographical area for July 1 to September 30, 2005.(A=Alive, D=Dead, LB=Leatherback, LH=Loggerhead, U=unknown).

AREA	REQUIRED		TURTLES				MAMMALS		BIRDS	
	TOTAL SETS OBSERVED	8% COVERAGE	A	D	LB/LH/U		A	D	A	D
GOM-2	48(3+%)	104	0/ 0/ 0	0			1	0	0	0
FEC-3	0(0%)	7	0/ 0/ 0	0			0	0	0	0
SAB-4	15(7+%)	16	0/ 1/ 0	0			0	0	0	0
MAB-5	42(13%)	26	1/ 3/ 0	0			11	0	0	0
NEC-6	0(0%)	28	0/ 0/ 0	0			0	0	0	0
<u>NED-7</u>	<u>14(3+%)</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>2/ 0/ 0</u>	<u>0</u>			<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
TOTAL	119(4+%)	210	3/ 4/ 0	0			12	0	0	0

Hook effort Summary:

Reg. 8% Coverage		CRP Experiment
Area	Hook effort	Hook effort
GOM	40,889	33,070
FEC	-	4,440
SAB	7,682	5,820
MAB	31,827	3,695
NEC	-	36,701
NCA	<u>14,130</u>	<u>-</u>
TOTAL	94,528	83,729

2005 CRP Experiment Sets

AREA	SETS	COVERAGE	TURTLES				MAMMAL		BIRDS	
			LB/LH/UN	A	D		A	D	A	D
GOM-2	51	100%	2/ 0/ 0	0			0	0	0	0
FEC-3*	9	100%	1/ 0/ 0	0			0	0	0	0
SAB-4	13	100%	0/ 0/ 0	0			0	0	0	0
MAB-5	4	100%	0/ 0/ 0	0			0	0	0	0
NEC-6	<u>43</u>	100%	<u>7/ 8/ 0</u>	<u>0</u>			<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
TOTAL	120		10/ 8/ 0	0			0	0	1	1

\*Note: No mainline gear drifted into the FEC closed area.